

Illinois Early Learning Council (ELC) Quality Committee

Facilitated by Co-Chairs Dan Harris and Teri Talan

Tuesday December 18, 2018 11:30 AM- 1:30 PM

Meeting Notes

Andrew Krugly	Jamilah R. Jor'dan	Maria Estland
Anna Perry	Jeremiah Jones	Melissa Johnson
Bethany Patten	Joni Scritchlow	Melissa Szymczak
Cathy Main	Joyce Weiner	Rebecca Pruitt
Cindy Berrey	Karen McCarthy	Rebecca Vonderlack Navarro
Cindy Mahr	Karen Zehnal	Sergio Hernandez
Cornelia Grumman	Karen Yarbrough	Teri Talan
Dan Harris	Kathy Slattery	Tola Alao
Debbi Rogers-Jaye	Kelly Cox	Toni Potenza
Debrah Clark	Lauri Morrison-Frichtl	Tonya Glaze
Donna Emmons	Marcus Brown	Wendy Uptain
Ellen (?)	Marcy Mendenhall	

Welcome & Introductions – Dan Harris and Teri Talan, Co-Chairs

- July meeting notes accepted. Meeting notes are shared for review/edits in advance of the meeting. Any further edits/revisions to the meeting notes should be sent to jscritchlow@incrra.org.

ExceleRate Illinois – discussion facilitated by Teri Talan (Attachment 1 & 2)

- ExceleRate Subcommittee Updated Work Plan and Components of Site-Based Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Leadership: *Creating a Culture of Caring, Reflection and Improvement* documents reviewed (attached).

Comments:

- Leaders can drive quality. Key questions are how to support programs in quality CQI which means it is embedded throughout program (not just one aspect). Suggestions from committee:
 - Strengthen the role of family throughout/where applicable. References are apparent within the plan, but do more to call out/strengthen
 - Increase parent involvement and center/family partnerships opportunities/maximize
 - When sharing documents, frame as continuous quality improvement from the standpoint of the parents and families: not so center/program focused
- Programs are in survival mode – which precludes focusing on CQI right now.
- To date: have not focused on funding for CQI implementation but instead on putting CQI in an identifiable “frame”
- Action Steps 4 & 5 re: supports and resources are the next focus or task of the ExceleRate Ad Hoc
- CQI focus must be broader than teachers. There are so many (too many) expectations on teachers and CQI should be across-the-program focused
- Need to remind ourselves that both community and school-based programs can benefit from CQI
- Focus groups interviewed exemplary programs to capture CQI practices
 - Dissonance in communication: parents suggest other avenues of communication between programs and parents – should not exclusively use teachers as only conduit

Teacher Shortage & Compensation - Strategies to Support the EC Workforce

- Transforming the Early Childhood Workforce Report recommendations based on the work of the i2I state group were shared by Cathy Main, UIC (Attachment 3)
 - This report was derived from the National Institute of Medicine's Transforming the Early Childhood Workforce report published in 2015. It includes both aspirational as well as smaller targeted goals.
 - Adults working with children are the key: their interactions with children drive quality and children's brain development
 - Comment: Under resourced programs/low pay for teachers is the elephant in the room when talking about any type of recommendations related to teachers and qualifications/education levels
- NGA/Compensation Work group and project report information was shared by Bethany Patten, GOECD. This is critical work in light of teacher shortages and need to ensure qualified teachers to drive quality. There are a range of compensation strategies embedded in the Achieving Compensation Parity: Illinois Goal for the Field of Early Childhood Care and Education (attachment 4 - summary)
 - NAEYC's Power to the Profession is also looking at both education and compensation and has crystallized a future audacious vision that all early childhood Educators III must have a BA
 - P2P is suggesting, that for now, all lead educators be required to have an Associate degree. Affordable, accessible pathways to achieve the BA must be built.
 - All these pieces inter-relate: funding/pathways/communication. The Children's Cabinet Workforce Project, ELC Quality Committee, Professional Development Advisory Council – all recognize the need to look at funding/pathways/communication in a holistic way.
 - Comment: we should throw away our current lens. Existing structures of revenue won't get us where we need to go. Not to say we shouldn't continue to advocate for more money, but we need a huge system change and that's a different paradigm
 - GOECD is in alignment with the i2I report recommendations: competency-based credentials, dual credit/dual enrollment, focused attention on pathways to help advance the workforce
 - Compensation should be reflection of education and knowledge
 - There is a task force looking at a system shift
 - Nationally – the topic of unions has come up. This might be the lever teachers need to gain compensation parity

Initiatives and Highlights from State Partners:

- **Illinois Department of Human Services** – Nakisha Hobbs, IDHS – no report
- **Illinois Department of Children and Family Services** – Carol Morris, IDCFS unable to attend; provided Information:
 - Pre-K expulsion was returned to OCFP staff with comments/questions and once addressed, will be sent to the Director's office for final approval to post at 1st notice.
 - As soon as Friday, OCFP may be moving the larger package to the Director's office for approval for permission to post at 1st notice (there are the larger group of amendments to Rules 406, 407 and 408).
 - The request to move the Credential Alignment Recommendations has been moved to the Director's office for review/approval.
- **Illinois State Board of Education** – Lynn Burgett, ISBE
 - PFA grants approved by Christmas
 - Expulsion rules should be posted for comment – then there will be 25 days open for comment/then revisions if any needed etc.
 - Data collection elements began this fiscal year. There are 122,000 students being rated
 - No updates on Universal Preschool/how we will move forward in securing this vision in Illinois

- Comment: ISBE considered recommendations around statutory changes needed to free up pathways for teachers. Need to make more progress on removing barriers.
- **Illinois Community College Board – Marcus Brown, ICCB**
 - The barriers related to compensation are real and work to the detriment of increasing numbers of students entering ECE
 - Pathways from community colleges to universities are being worked on, could be strengthened
- **Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development – Bethany Patten, GOECD**
 - In addition to earlier information shared, GOECD had applied for a Preschool Development Grant. A larger than anticipated number of states applied (47).
 - Illinois was asked if we would take 71% of funding and we said “yes”
 - The Average PDG grant was around 5 million. The funding will be allocated by 12.13.18 so we should be hearing soon
 - PDG grants must be expended/work completed within 1 year (by close of 2019)
- **Advocacy Partners - Maria Estlund, Illinois Action for Children and Joyce Weiner, The Ounce**
 - Some of the TEACH Illinois Report recommendations are challenging. Example: the recommendation that teachers can attend programs to gain licensure outside of higher education. Data and research shows that people who are fully prepared tend to stay in the field. Those that are less prepared have higher turnover so this strategy may not help the teacher shortage or secure strong, stable teachers for children
 - Monitor the next legislative session with the lens of: is this in the best interest of our children?
 - World Health Organization just put early childhood as a high priority
 - Advocacy organizations in Illinois recognize and are on board with early childhood compensation as a high priority

Next Steps

- Suggestion made to consider an ELC Quality Ad Hoc Committee to build consensus and to ensure that compensation parity is a top legislative priority of the early childhood advocates.
 - Would this help lift compensation as the #1 priority for the ELC Quality Committee?
 - Is this a call to action?
 - Parent advocacy will be a key

Adjourned

ExceleRate Subcommittee, Updated Work Plan, 11/16/18.

FY19 Goal 1

Develop a coordinated approach to supporting program (site level) improvement based on Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) principles. Define the role of program leaders in leading CQI. Include success measures at the site, TA provider, and state levels.

Updated Work Plan

Action Steps	Task Details	Completion date	Key People	Status
1. Accept or propose changes to the Validation Study Review Work Group's recommendation for this subcommittee's focus. (Goal 1 above)		First meeting		Complete
2. Articulate a shared vision of CQI at the program site level.	(a) Identify key concepts and definitions to guide the work, including continuous quality improvement, job-embedded professional learning, relationship-based professional development, etc. Define the role of program leaders in leading CQI and the roles of other staff members in CQI teams.		Layman Hentschel M. Hawley & LLE team	Components list complete Glossary almost complete
	(b) Look at relevant CQI-related standards now embedded in ExceleRate (PAS, accreditations, the existing Award of Excellence standard, etc.), and others potentially useful in ExceleRate.	August 2018	Talan (PAS, BAS) Jill Bella (NAEYC) Emmons (HS/EHS) IL AEYC (NAC)	Complete
	(c) Collect examples of CQI practices at exemplary levels in centers and schools in Illinois and elsewhere. Look especially for work teams that regularly reflect and improve. Ask Quality Specialists for examples as well.	August 2018	(c) Chalmers & team Wicking, Jackson, Volpe, Heinz, Metcalf, Ejeh, M. Hawley, Nelson, Bradley (FCE), Ropars (Inclusion)	Complete
	(d) Sort & analyze them	Fall, 2018	(d) Abel	Complete

Action Steps	Task Details	Completion date	Key People	Status
3. Develop an inventory of current statewide supports for <u>program leaders</u> to implement CQI.	Develop an inventory format, based the CQI Components list List statewide supports for program improvement in the chosen format.	December 2018	Layman, Metcalf, Knight, Emmons, Wicking, Chalmers, Volpe, M. Hawley, Chamberlain, Ropars	
4. Identify opportunities for aligning and coordinating existing supports.	Review inventory of statewide supports and propose (a) content improvements to incorporate or align CQI models, and (b) how the supports might coordinate or work together to advance the CQI vision developed by this Subcommittee. Consider how community-level alignment of supports might work through Communities of Practice.	February 2019		
5. Identify unmet program support needs, including scaling of supports listed in (4) and any new supports needed.	Propose additional services or resources needed.	February 2019		
6. Develop site-based CQI practice standards differentiated by Circle.	Propose an initial set of revisions to ExceleRate standards and measures to reflect this focus on site-based CQI processes. Break down the Teaching & Learning standard 4C on reflective practice groups into steps from Licensed to Gold levels. Try to design revisions that don't increase the number of standards. Consider efficient ways to measure compliance with any proposed standards.			

Components of Site-Based CQI Leadership: *Creating a Culture of Caring, Reflection and Improvement*

This chart describes how a program leader creates an organizational culture that supports Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) and how the leader structures the CQI work. ExceleRate Illinois defines CQI as follows:

"CQI is a leadership philosophy and an ongoing process that involves the Plan, Do, Study, Act (or Plan, Do, Review) cycle. It is proactive, not reactive. It is related to the internal "owning" of a process by the team in a program. It goes beyond meeting the externally applied regulations and standards – and moves the lever for change internally, using data to guide decisions and reflect upon the results of the improvement plan to increase program quality."¹ (See the last page in this document for a diagram of the Plan-Do-Study-Act cycle.)

What does a program leader do?	Whole Leadership Dimension	EC Work Environment Survey
Building a foundation for CQI: Leadership Essentials² "Leadership Essentials are foundational competencies and individual qualities necessary for leading people that are expressed in personal leadership styles and dispositions. Leadership essentials are often developed through reflective practice." (McCormick Center)		
Take charge of quality improvement		
Demonstrate commitment and energy for continuous improvement and a belief that your work with the team to jointly construct program improvements will make a difference in children's lives.	<i>Self-efficacy</i>	
Lead by example		
<u>Model caring and learning</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make time to be with staff, families and children • Listen • Show understanding and empathy • Help find people's strengths <u>Learn about and welcome people of every race and culture</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find, include, and value people from other cultures in your professional and personal life. Seek to learn from and with them. • Understand your own cultural background and limitations, and that you will always be learning about other cultures. • Create places that are safe and trusting for all. • Include gender identity in your efforts to understand others. <u>Value and build on the talents and strengths of each person, culture and community</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize the talents and strengths of each child and staff member and find ways to make use of them in classroom and program activities. • Incorporate exploration and learning about children's cultures and communities. 	<i>Empathy</i> <i>Learner</i> <i>Authenticity</i> <i>Humility</i> <i>Transparency</i>	Supervisor Support Collegiality

¹ Continuous Quality Improvement and ExceleRate Illinois, Illinois BUILD CQI Team, 2015 (www.exceleRateIllinoisproviders.com: Resources by Standard for Licensed Child Care and School-Based Programs, Standard 1C. Continuous Quality Improvement).

² Components are grouped using the Whole Leadership Framework developed by the McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership (<https://mccormickcenter.ni.edu/library/whole-leadership-a-framework-for-early-childhood-programs>).

What does a program leader do?	Whole Leadership Dimension	EC Work Environment Survey
<p><u>Develop Trust and Collegiality</u></p> <p>Use a variety of strategies to develop trust and collegiality among staff, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show humility, empathy and limitations. • Discuss one's own values and hopes while taking an interest in those of staff members. • Listen – "Seek first to understand, then to be understood." • Believe in staff members, show respect and appreciate their strengths. • Be open about organizational plans & challenges, seek advice from staff, share bad news that will affect staff as early as possible. • Demonstrate ethical conduct (The NAEYC Code of Ethics provides guidance) 		
Communicate		
<p><u>Communicate clearly, often, and in multiple ways</u></p> <p>Communicate frequently and with transparency about how the program works, its policies, procedures, and decisions that have been made. Listen and respond to staff concerns.</p> <p><u>Recognize good work.</u></p> <p>Acknowledge the contributions of staff members by listening to them, acting on their ideas, distributing or sharing leadership with them, and thanking them in private and in public.</p>		Clarity
Create a learning organization		
<p><u>Cultivate "reciprocal learning"</u></p> <p>In a learning organization all the individuals – teachers, other staff members, children and families – learn from each other and build knowledge together. Create opportunities for every individual to contribute their unique strengths and interests.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage teachers to learn from their children and find new ways to engage them. Every day presents unique opportunities. • Ensure that staff members experience the same kind of active, engaged learning that the children experience. The leader's role is to help each staff member be successful. <p><u>Be the "chief learner"</u></p> <p>Increase your own professional knowledge and share with others. Contribute to the profession through involvement in Communities of Practice, professional associations and the like.</p>	<i>Creativity Learner</i>	Supervisor Support Professional Growth Innovativeness
Make decisions that put children first		
<p>Ensure that children's well-being is the first and most important consideration in all decisions including budgeting, staffing and daily operations.</p>	<i>Integrity</i>	

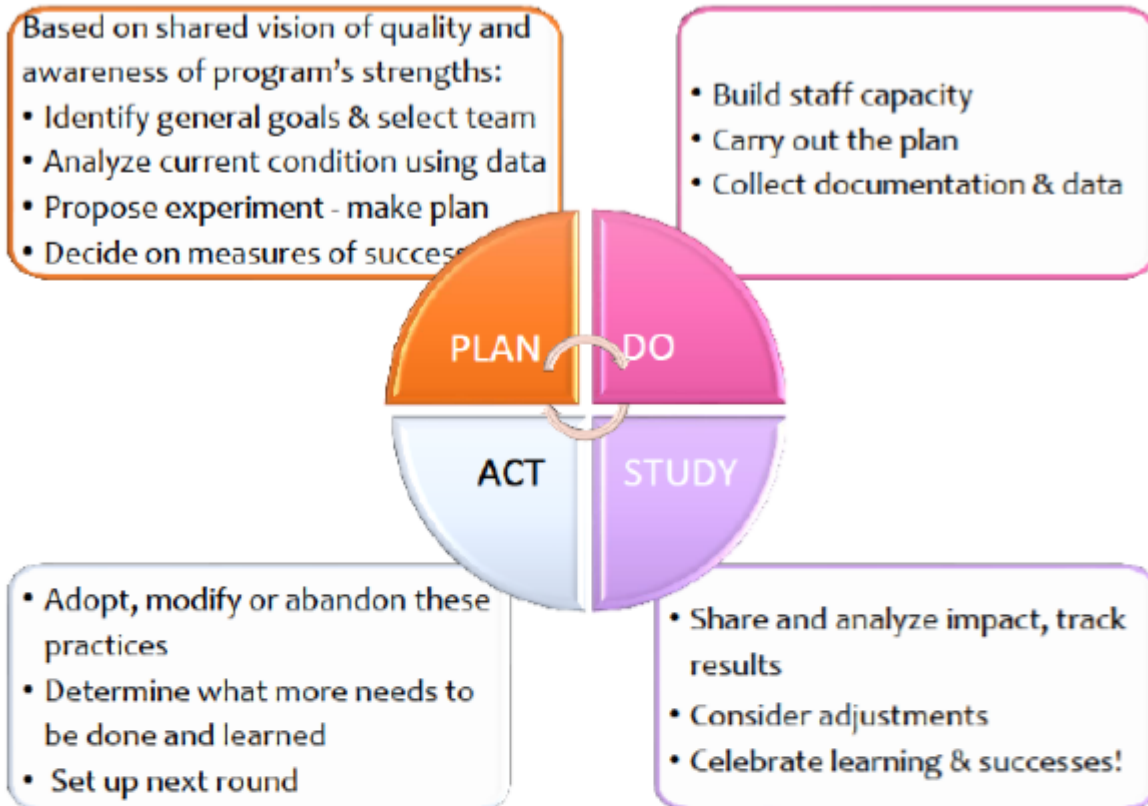
What does a program leader do?	Whole Leadership Dimension	EC Work Environment Survey
Maximizing Team Capacity: Administrative Leadership "Coordinating work and mobilizing people to ensure the organization remains stable and continues to grow."		
Develop an authentic mission and vision		
Engage staff teams and families to develop or update a shared mission or vision for the program that is built on values and strengths.	Strategic Leadership	Goal Consensus
Build a team or teams for collaborative reflection and improvement planning		
<u>Build staff teams for 2 purposes:</u> 1. Collaborative reflection and <u>planning based on observations and assessments of children</u> Ensure that classroom teams meet regularly for planning, sharing and problem-solving – focused on children's learning and development. Teams use observations of children and child assessment instruments to guide this work. (A team could be the teachers in one classroom or the teachers from several classrooms. Child observations might include anecdotal notes, review of work products, etc., and examples of child assessments instruments would include Teaching Strategies GOLD, Work Sampling System, etc.) 2. Collaborative reflection and <u>planning based on program quality goals and assessments</u> Ensure that one or more teams meet regularly for planning, sharing and problem-solving – focused on program quality. Teams use measures of program administration, organizational climate and culture, or unique program goals to guide this work. (Measures might include results from ERS, CLASS, PAS, accreditation indicators, licensing compliance, EWES, SEQUAL, Early Ed Essentials Survey, etc. See glossary re acronyms.)	Strategic Leadership	Collegiality Goal consensus Decision-making Innovativeness
<u>Communicate team purpose and structure</u> --Communicate the goals of the team(s) and benefits to children, families and staff members --Discuss how the team will work, including frequency of meetings, desired results and supports from the organization --Build on strengths within the teams	Strategic Leadership	Clarity Collegiality Goal consensus Supervisor support
<u>Specify routines or protocols for meetings</u> Ensure that team meetings use a standard format or routine to examine child and classroom data (including anecdotes and stories) or program quality data and make plans based on the data and the team's goals. Ensure that teams are facilitated by staff member(s) trained in the formats or routines used. (Routines can range from simply ending a meeting with an action plan and reviewing it at the start of the next meeting, to regular use of the Tuning Protocol for activity planning, to the "Data Dialogues" described in Lead, Learn, Excel, and more. They help teams focus consistently on their goals.)	Strategic Leadership	Clarity Task Orientation

What does a program leader do?	Whole Leadership Dimension	EC Work Environment Survey
Include job-embedded professional learning		
<p><u>Provide team training within the Plan-Do-Study-Act or Plan-Do-Review cycle</u></p> <p>Ensure that learning experiences for staff support team planning and problem-solving. When the team decides on a goal in the “Plan” phase, remember to build staff capacity as part of the “Do” phase.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> When possible, include college credits for this job-embedded professional learning. <p>(Refer to ExceleRate Plan-Do-Study-Act diagram at the end of this document. Learning experiences might include targeted trainings, coaching, peer to peer sharing, etc.)</p>	<i>Strategic Leadership</i>	<p>Task orientation</p> <p>Professional growth</p>
Put organizational supports in place		
<p><u>Distribute or share leadership functions</u></p> <p>One program leader cannot usually perform all leadership functions required in an organization – and often these reflective practice and program improvement functions are left out. Create a shared leadership structure including defined areas of responsibility, scope of authority and reporting relationships.</p>	<i>Operational Leadership</i>	<p>Supervisor Support</p> <p>Decision Making</p>
<p><u>Specify and protect paid time for staff teams to meet</u></p> <p>Ideally, teams will reflect and plan for children weekly, and reflect on overall program quality measures at least monthly. Not all programs have the staffing or resources to do that, but however they structure collaborative reflection, it should take place regularly during paid time.</p>	<i>Operational Leadership</i>	<p>Professional Growth</p> <p>Task Orientation</p>
<p><u>Specify and protect paid time for teachers to reflect and plan with parents or family members</u></p> <p>Parents are the child’s first and most important teachers. Learning experiences will be most effective if designed in consultation with the parent.</p>		
<p><u>Provide regular developmental, reflective supervision</u> (based on observations of practice) for each staff member outside of team meetings.</p>	<i>Operational Leadership</i>	Supervisor Support
<p><u>Ensure that staff have access to and support for professional learning opportunities</u>, both on the job and in other settings. Opportunities might include participation in an External Community of Practice, training cohort, release time for education, tuition reimbursement, etc.</p>	<i>Operational Leadership</i>	<p>Professional Growth</p> <p>Supervisor Support</p>
Engage stakeholders in program self-assessment		
<p>Periodic self-assessments inform goal-setting for daily, weekly or monthly CQI work. Tools are available from funding streams, accreditation systems and ExceleRate Illinois. (See next section regarding use of this information.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Assemble a program self-assessment team that includes families and community members with varying cultural perspectives</u> <p>It is important to include families and community members in establishing program priorities that reflect what they want for their children and make best use of community resources.</p>	<i>Operational Leadership</i>	Goal consensus

What does a program leader do?	Leadership Dimension	Environment Survey
Professional Practice: Pedagogical Leadership "Leading the art and science of teaching with an emphasis on educator dispositions and high-quality interactions with children."		
Prepare to use Plan-Do-Study-Act (or Plan-Do-Review)		
<u>Know professional standards</u> Become familiar with the sets of standards on which professional practice is based (Licensing, Accreditation, Head Start, ExceleRate, etc.).	<i>Instructional Leadership</i>	
<u>Identify the standards or set of standards most important or strategic for achieving the program's mission at this stage of development</u> Plan-Do-Study-Act or Plan-Do-Review cycles can advance compliance and goal achievement at any stage of program development. The program leader needs to review the standards and supports most important and useful for program development and choose which set or pathway the program will focus on.	<i>Instructional Leadership</i>	
<u>Collect documents and tools for the chosen route</u> If accreditation, for example, enroll in self-study and receive the self-study materials. If the ExceleRate Assessment Route, attend orientation, print standards, and find support materials on the ExceleRate Illinois Providers website.	<i>Instructional Leadership</i>	
<u>Join an external Community of Practice or Cohort for program leaders</u> Program leaders benefit from opportunities to share and learn from other program leaders. Opportunities are often available through CCR&R agencies, SAM cohorts, Lead-Learn-Excel cohorts, Aim4Excellence cohorts, Taking Charge of Change cohorts, community collaborations, AEYC chapters and more. (See glossary re acronyms.)	<i>Instructional Leadership</i>	
Make data available and train staff on its use		
Ensure that useful data on children's learning and program quality is made available to staff teams or generated by staff members. (Data sources might include: Child observations and assessments such as anecdotal notes, review of work products, data from Teaching Strategies GOLD, Work Sampling System, etc., and program assessment results from ERS, CLASS, PAS, accreditation indicators, licensing compliance, EWES, SEQUAL, Early Ed Essentials Survey, etc. See glossary re acronyms.)	<i>Instructional Leadership</i>	

What does a program leader do?	Whole Leadership Dimension	EC Work Environment Survey
Model and lead reflective practice including Plan-Do-Study-Act (or Plan-Do-Review Cycles)		
<p><u>Help staff teams use the specific data collected on their classroom or program to generate ideas for improvements and to try them.</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Based on your professional knowledge, lead team discussion about which program activities are reflected the data and encourage classroom or family program observation to help with this discussion. This “root cause analysis” will help the team generate ideas for small, achievable changes. Ask the team how its improvement ideas could build on the strengths and priorities of families from multiple cultures. Value small, short-term experimental changes. Assure the team that they will learn from the experiment whether it succeeds or fails. <p><u>Find and make available relevant training and technical assistance for the team as part of the planning cycle.</u></p> <p>For example, if a team is working on children’s behavior issues, training on the Pyramid Model might help them generate ideas for improvements. If the team is working to raise child assessment scores in math, consultation with Erikson Institute’s Early Math Collaborative might help them.</p> <p><u>Ensure that team reflection and planning always aligns with the program’s mission and values and supports the values of enrolled families</u></p> <p>An authentic and effective mission and values statement is developed with staff, families and community representatives from multiple cultures. Update the statement frequently and help each staff member to embrace it.</p>	Instructional Leadership	

See the next page for a diagram of the Plan-Do-Study-Act cycle.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Transforming the Early Childhood Workforce

A Call to Action for the State of Illinois



Report Authors: Catherine Main and Karen W. Yarbrough
November 2018

A joint project of the Illinois Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development and the University of Illinois at Chicago College of Education



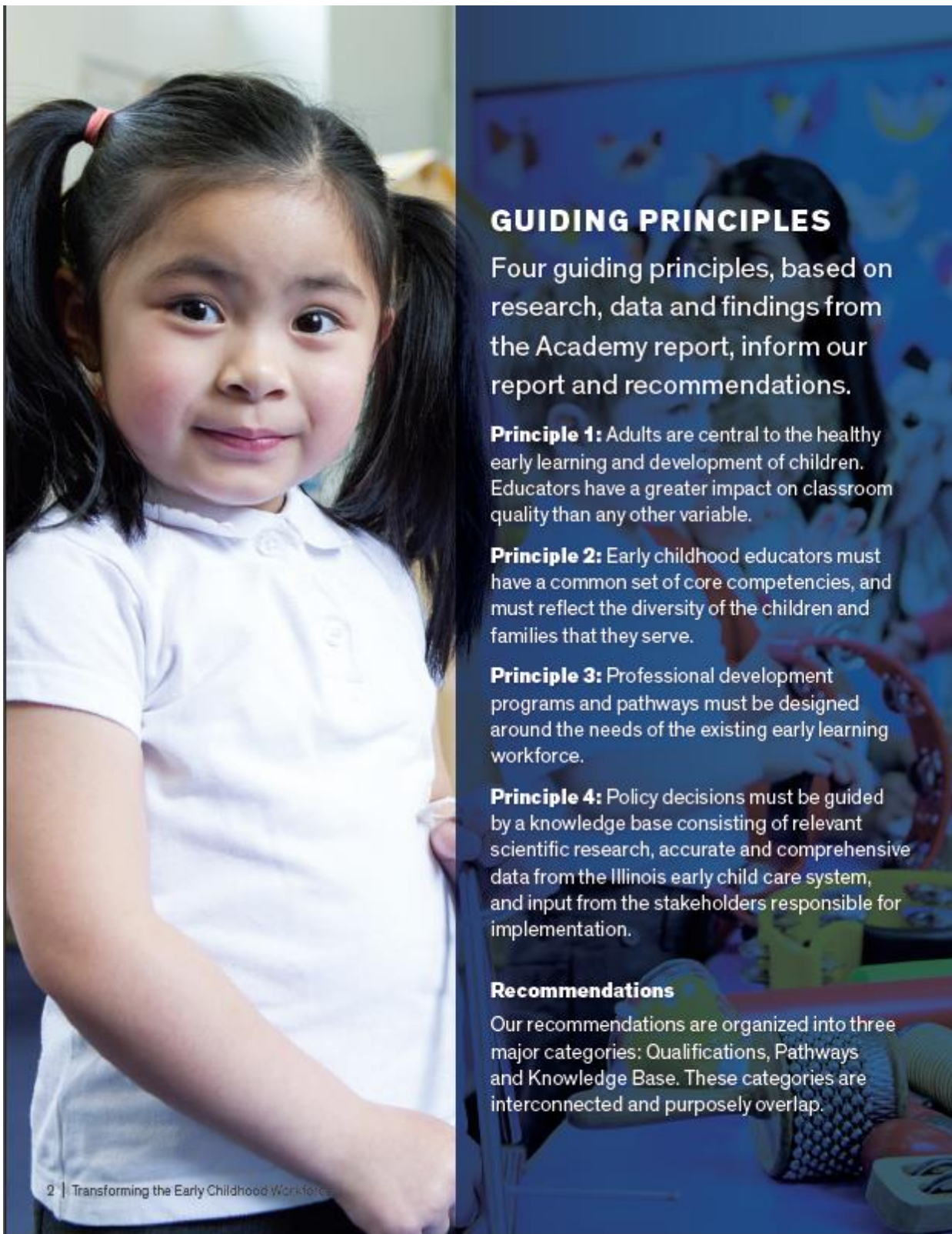
Illinois has long been a national leader in early childhood education. Yet, the state lacks the workforce it needs to ensure that all children – particularly those most vulnerable to negative developmental, school and life consequences – receive the care and learning opportunities they deserve.

Recent research in child development, brain science and economics has transformed what we know about the needs and potential of young children. The research underscores that the qualifications, compensation, and linguistic and cultural competencies of the adults working with children play an enormous role in their development, learning and overall well-being.

Nationally, our early childhood workforce suffers from fragmentation, low compensation, uneven professionalism and varying qualifications. Illinois is no different. Our system is driven by multiple funding streams and a tangled web of conflicting program requirements rather than the needs of children. Fortunately, in Illinois, change is underway.

In 2015, the National Institute of Medicine (now called the National Academy of Medicine), published "Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth

Through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation." That landmark report provided a blueprint for how to improve our nation's early childhood workforce. To facilitate implementation of these recommendations at the state level, the Academy launched the Innovation to Incubation "i2i" program. Illinois was selected by the Academy as one of five states to participate in the i2i program and to develop a state-specific plan based on the Academy's recommendations. This report reflects the work and input of Illinois' i2i team, with input and guidance from a broader array of early childhood stakeholders across Illinois. While the guiding principles and recommendations contained in this report closely align with the Academy's report, our recommendations are specific to Illinois, and some already are being implemented.



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Four guiding principles, based on research, data and findings from the Academy report, inform our report and recommendations.

Principle 1: Adults are central to the healthy early learning and development of children. Educators have a greater impact on classroom quality than any other variable.

Principle 2: Early childhood educators must have a common set of core competencies, and must reflect the diversity of the children and families that they serve.

Principle 3: Professional development programs and pathways must be designed around the needs of the existing early learning workforce.

Principle 4: Policy decisions must be guided by a knowledge base consisting of relevant scientific research, accurate and comprehensive data from the Illinois early child care system, and input from the stakeholders responsible for implementation.

Recommendations

Our recommendations are organized into three major categories: Qualifications, Pathways and Knowledge Base. These categories are interconnected and purposely overlap.

Qualifications

Early childhood settings vary greatly across Illinois, primarily because different types of programs are governed by different agencies and funded through sources with specific regulations and administrative rules. Each funding stream has different qualification requirements for early childhood administrators, teachers, and assistants; therefore, the workforce inevitably ends up with different levels of education and expertise. This variation creates a job market plagued by constant turnover as educators who earn higher education degrees and credentials often leave less lucrative positions in child care settings for better-compensated employment in settings such as public schools. Ultimately, this inconsistency in employment qualifications results in real inequities for children and families across program types.

To address these challenges, we recommend:

1 Adopting workforce qualifications that are aligned with a uniform, competency-based credentialing system.

The National Academy of Medicine report recommends a uniform, competency-based credentialing system designed to ensure that all workforce members in similar positions, regardless of the setting, are operating from the same set of knowledge, skills and experiences.

These qualification requirements do not align across early childhood settings and were not created around a set of uniform competencies.

Fortunately, a competency-based system is being developed in Illinois, using the Illinois Gateways to Opportunity® Early Childhood Education (ECE) Credentials as a framework. The Gateways Credentials are recognized across the state and already integrated into preparation programs and the state quality rating system. We recommend the continued effort in developing competencies and related assessments. We also recommend creating a cross-agency group to align educator qualifications with each other.

2 Increasing minimum qualifications

We recommend that all lead teachers working with young children in licensed Illinois child care centers hold a bachelor's degree, coupled with an Illinois Gateways Level 5 ECE Credential. We also recommend that all teacher assistants in both licensed centers and school-based programs demonstrate foundational competencies in early childhood education. These ambitious changes to qualification requirements will require changes in statute and possibly also in rules and regulations. More importantly, any new qualification requirements must be accompanied by coordinated and supportive pathways for workforce members to attain the new qualifications. Changes should be rolled out incrementally, with adequate time to earn the required degrees and credentials, and as part of uniform qualification system. Progress towards these goals should be carefully monitored to identify and avoid unintended consequences.



Knowledge Base

To build a highly qualified early childhood workforce in Illinois, it is essential to build a knowledge base specifically designed to better inform early childhood workforce policies such as qualification requirements and pathways to increased educational attainment and credentials. This knowledge base must be built on sound scientific principles of child development, include Illinois specific information about the characteristics and qualifications of the existing workforce, and incorporate the voices of professionals that work directly with young children and their families. These policies, in turn, will lead to continuous quality improvement in programs for young children and their families.

To accomplish this, we recommend:

1 Adhering to sound research principles and the science of early childhood development to ensure the appropriate use of data.

Data from the assessments of children, teachers, and classrooms should be used to improve teacher and program quality—not to evaluate job performance, or to compete for funding, as there is little evidence to support this type of use. We must balance the need for accountability with appropriate assessment of young children and their teachers, as well as the use of assessment data for high-stakes decision making. We emphasize using extreme caution with child assessment data in particular. We recommend that a group of Illinois early childhood stakeholders conduct a review of existing policies and practices related to the assessment of children, teachers, and classrooms and then revise policies as needed.

2 Ensuring that data systems across all programs are accurately and consistently collecting data over time.

Comprehensive data that accurately describes the characteristics of Illinois' early childhood education workforce is a foundational element of our knowledge base. For example, a more comprehensive database could help determine whether the most vulnerable children have access to qualified educators or it could illuminate how members of the workforce advance their

credentials. The Gateways to Opportunity Registry and the Illinois Longitudinal Data System (ILDS)—an intergovernmental agreement to share data across systems—provide a strong foundation for Illinois to become a leader in building a robust knowledge base. These data-sharing agreements across agencies are a necessary first step but they are not enough. We would like to see the design of data collection and storage that allow linking and sharing of children and educator data across state agencies, which will enable researchers to examine workforce patterns and trends over time. We also recommend that state agencies review their own data systems and identify necessary changes and additions in order to collect better data and align it across agencies.

3 Creating a collaborative of researchers, policymakers, key stakeholders and practitioners

We must shift away from the linear progression of research to policy or research to practice and move toward a more integrated, dynamic approach that includes the voices of early childhood practitioners and focuses on the real problems of everyday practice. We recommend that researchers, policymakers and practitioners work together to design studies and use study results to inform policies that will address real-world problems.

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CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

Here is our vision: Increased qualifications for the early childhood workforce aligned with a statewide competency-based credentialing system accompanied by more accessible pathways that ensure a diverse workforce. That effort will be informed by an aligned and collaborative knowledge base, and will result in the kind of high-quality, well-prepared and fully-equipped workforce that Illinois' youngest children so desperately need. Acting upon these recommendations will require engagement at local, state and federal levels among policymakers, advocates, government agencies and institutions of higher education. Those conversations inevitably will be complex and even uncomfortable, but also worthwhile. This report is intended to help prompt, guide and inform these critical conversations.



For more information about *Transforming the Early Childhood Workforce: A Call to Action for the State of Illinois*, please contact Catherine Main at cmain@uic.edu or Karen Yarbrough at karen@kyarbrough.net.

Achieving Compensation Parity: Illinois Goal for the Field of Early Childhood Care and Education

The Problem

To achieve the best outcomes for children and their families, high-quality programs must employ a professionally prepared and compensated workforce. Federal and state investments and private support for early childhood services are indicative of the value that we place on young children and their families. The individuals that make up the workforce must be able to effectively work with young children, engage families in their healthy development, and coordinate with support services. As a state and nation we have taken great strides in improving program quality and practitioner qualifications, yet minimal progress has been made over the past 25 years in achieving compensation parity for comparable qualifications.

While education-related salary schedules have been in place for decades for elementary and secondary teachers, the early care and education (ECE) workforce continues to suffer from low wages. A 2015 Georgetown University study, *What It's Worth: The Economic Value of College Majors*, found early childhood education to be the major with the lowest average pay (Carnevale, Strohl, and Melton, 2015). National and state data indicate that early care and education professionals leave the field at nearly twice the rate of public school teachers (U.S. Department of Education, 2014; Illinois Department of Human Services, 2013). Despite the tremendous increase in the demand for child care that has occurred as mothers of young children have increased their labor force participation, the wages of the ECE workforce have remained relatively flat over the last two decades. Furthermore, most members of the early care and education workforce have financial worries that can lead to both mental and physical health issues and impact their interactions with children (Whitebook, Phillips, and Howes, 2014).

Annual average wages for members of the early childhood workforce with a bachelor's degree are about half of the average wage for members of the general workforce with bachelor's degrees. The average annual salary for all categories of work requiring a bachelor's degree in the U.S. is \$57,000, while the average salary for all ECE jobs in the U.S. is \$31,000. In Illinois, the average salary for all jobs requiring a bachelor's degree is \$53,000 and the average annual salary for all ECE jobs is \$32,000 (READYNATION, 2015; US Department of Human Services, 2013). To achieve compensation parity, an early childhood teacher with a bachelor's degree and specialized competencies should receive \$53,000-\$57,000 per state and national comparison.

Salary Recommendations

The Early Learning Council Program Standards and Quality Workforce Compensation Subcommittee recommends that the field move toward a beginning salary of \$24 per hour for early care and education teachers who hold bachelor's degrees with specialized competencies.

To achieve compensation parity with public school teachers, the committee recommends these steps: 1) establish an entry-level salary at \$15.00/hour; 2) increase the entry-level salary to \$17/hour to establish parity with Head Start teachers; and 3) achieve parity with public school teachers by setting the entry-level salary at \$24/hour.

Wages can be adjusted regionally using standard multipliers. Current data systems already in place would be updated to verify and track average salaries.

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Why Compensation Parity is Important

Without compensation parity with public schools and other fields, we will continue to lose our best and brightest early childhood teachers and administrators to professions that offer better salaries, benefits, and working conditions. Continually high rates of those leaving the field are compounded by increased demand for a highly-skilled workforce, a result of new federal grant awards and changes in federal policies. The Illinois Department of Employment Security's predicted need for 806 new preschool teachers between 2014 and 2016 adds urgency to the mandate. Unless Illinois establishes compensation parity now, our youngest children will continue to suffer from our teacher deficits – deficits in numbers of teachers and teaching expertise caused by continuous, rapid turnover.

In 2015, Illinois' early childhood services received over \$18 million in new Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships Grants (awarded annually for up to 5 years) and \$80 million in federal Preschool Expansion Grants (\$20 million per year through 2018). With this funding comes increased requirements in staff qualifications and demand for more teachers, administrators, and support staff. By 2018, Preschool for All is estimated to add 24,000 new spaces for children, 1100 new lead teachers, and 1100 assistant teachers. Additionally, there are increased training requirements and a focus on quality from the 2014 reauthorization of the federal Child Care and Development Fund. Also, under the Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge funding, ExceleRate® Illinois has set the standards for program quality and workforce qualifications that apply to all early childhood sectors and settings (<http://www.exceleRateillinois.com>).

Given the increased investment in early childhood education at the state and national levels it is clear that Illinois needs a robust and talented workforce to secure our future on two fronts: to meet increased demand for early educators in this decade and to support student success in the decades to come. The U.S. Department of Labor indicates that child care as a field is expected to have a 14% growth rate over the next decade. According to ReadyNation, by the end of the current decade, Illinois will face a shortage of bachelor's level workers – across all occupations - leaving a gap of 150,000 unfilled skilled positions. "To reverse Illinois' skills-gap troubles, ReadyNation urges greater, research-proven investments in supports for young children's learning and development" (ReadyNation, 2015).

Methodology

In the fall of 2014, the Workforce Compensation Subcommittee of the Program Standards and Quality Committee, Illinois Early Learning Council was charged with developing ranges for compensation parity aligned with qualifications and roles using the most recent and reliable state and national data. The Subcommittee also explored benefits that make up typical and expected compensation packages and workplace conditions (the practices, supports, and environmental elements that contribute to job satisfaction and effective practice).

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The Subcommittee chose to examine compensation parity in line with educational level, not experience, focusing on wages for teachers with bachelor's degrees. This approach assumes that a degree with its specialized knowledge and competencies is a marker for the skills and qualifications needed for various roles. This approach also assumes that those with greater leadership and management responsibilities and those with less classroom management responsibilities will be compensated accordingly.

For the purpose of this report and as a starting point for a broader consideration of compensation, the wage, benefits, and workplace conditions that we explore in the full report focus on licensed center-based staff. We see the field of early care and education as a career with many roles, pathways, and educational levels. The Work Group recognizes that administrators, assistant teachers, family support workers, home visitors, social workers, early interventionists, paraprofessionals, and many more also compose the early care and education workforce. We chose the current focus of licensed center-based teachers with a bachelor's degree and documented early childhood competencies for the sake of brevity and as a starting point for further discussions and investigations of compensation parity among all roles within the field.

Although compensation is the primary focus of this report summary, the Subcommittee also explored benefits that make up typical and expected compensation packages and found that the early childhood field provides paid holidays, sick leave and medical insurance benefits at average levels comparable to those paid across all fields. This fact does not negate the need for increased benefits or more standardized practices within the field of early childhood, as explored in the full report. In general, however, the benefits issues are not unique to early childhood. A third area of examination was "workplace conditions" – the practices, supports, and environmental elements that contribute to job satisfaction and effective practice.

STRENGTHENING THE WORKFORCE

Changes ... are needed to strengthen the early care and education workforce through supports that include informed leadership; access to high-quality degree-granting programs; ongoing professional learning opportunities; practice environments that enable and reinforce the quality of their work; and attention to their working conditions, well-being, compensation, and perceived status or prestige.

Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age 8 A Unifying Foundation, Report Brief, 2015, Institute of Medicine

Findings

The Subcommittee determined that the average statewide salary for early childhood teachers with bachelor's degrees and specialized competencies working 40 hours per week, 49 weeks per year should be \$49,000 or \$24 per hour. Twenty-four dollars per hour would establish parity with beginning licensed public school teachers with bachelor's degrees who earn a statewide average of \$37,000 annually for 190 8-hour days (\$24 an hour). This figure remains below the average Illinois salary for bachelor's degrees across all fields (\$53,000).

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Health insurance is the benefit of greatest value to all employees. The lower the income the more important it is. Some employees are willing to take a lower hourly wage for better health coverage (Monster.com, 2015). Providing information about and technical assistance on the Affordable Care Act could increase employee access to health care coverage and potentially lower administrative costs that would allow more program assets to be targeted to wages.

Strong leadership and management skills are linked to compliance with health and safety regulations (child and adult), effective classroom practices and ongoing professional development, parent engagement in their children's development, and connecting families and staff to support services. Strong leaders who attend to these critical program characteristics set the conditions in which high quality teaching and learning is optimized. Requiring that ExceleRate programs meet standards related to program management, work environment, and staff supports could improve job satisfaction, teacher practice, and child outcomes.

Good stewardship of public, private, and family funds requires us to look at the costs to society for paying substandard compensation to the ECE workforce. If Illinois is to secure a workforce capable of achieving the lasting outcomes society demands then it is imperative that we employ innovative approaches to current and potential sources of both public and private funding.

Suggested Strategies to Attract and Retain a Highly-Qualified Workforce

The following strategies build on existing initiatives as a method for achieving compensation parity using current sources of funding and existing infrastructure. These strategies require both public and private support at the local, state, and federal levels for successful implementation. Additional strategies are detailed in the full report.

- ✦ Develop or require ExceleRate program standards that meet the compensation levels outlined in this summary. For example, PAS indicators rate wage scales, pay increases, and benefits, but are not currently required. Standards could be adjusted to align with the subcommittee's recommendations and then be incrementally required for quality ratings.
- ✦ Require 80% of current rate enhancements and quality incentives, regardless of funding source, be budgeted for compensation. For example, 80% of enhanced rates for quality, paid directly to programs, would be targeted to internal wage scales aligned with ExceleRate requirements (staff qualifications and PAS Indicators).
- ✦ Prioritize Great Start Wage Supplements to those who meet ExceleRate staff requirements. Target the highest rated programs and prioritize staff with ECE bachelor's degrees/ExceleRate staff qualifications. Or transition the Great Start program from a wage supplement to the individual to higher contract or reimbursement rates to the program based on ExceleRate level, specific ExceleRate wage/benefit standards and staff qualifications, and number of qualified staff employed. Because Great Start eligibility is income-based and is not available to individuals who make above a certain wage, the program may actually be keeping wages in some centers artificially low to ensure that staff qualify for the wage supplement.
- ✦ Ensure that all new requests for federal early childhood funding include allocations for bachelor's level teaching and administrative staff salaries at a minimum of \$49,000/\$24.00 an hour (regionally adjusted).

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Technical assistance efforts that focus on ExceleRate standards and improve management skills and classroom practices can also help both retain and attract a highly-qualified workforce. The following are a few examples of technical assistance that can support compensation parity.

- *Provide technical assistance on the Affordable Care Act to ExceleRate program administrators and staff.*
- *Align coaching and mentoring opportunities to program improvement or individual professional development plans that address ExceleRate standards related to workplace conditions.*
- *Provide opportunities for peer interactions and relationship-based professional development to improve instructional practices and enhance job satisfaction.*

Summary

There is no person, program, or funding source – public or private - that can singlehandedly achieve compensation parity for the ECE workforce. Just as there is no simple solution to achieve parity, there is also no finite marker of success as compensation and workforce supports will need to adjust with changes in society and advances in research. It will take public and private partners, families and practitioners, representatives of higher education and technical assistance providers, along with business leaders and early childhood advocates coordinating efforts over a number of years to achieve the goals of compensation and benefits parity and a supportive work environment. In that period of time, new research will continue to inform best practices and drive us to be ever more effective and efficient in how we support ECE services - but even with an eye to that long term and ongoing work, Illinois' immediate needs are undeniable. Illinois needs highly skilled early childhood teachers now. We must start moving toward parity this year, even as we work to achieve a sustainable long term solution to the problem of compensation parity. We must start moving toward parity this year. Collectively, with determination to find a viable solution, commitment to a common vision, and the fortitude to change the status quo, we can realize a fairly-compensated, professional workforce for Illinois' children.

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